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ABSTRACT

The relationship between nonstandard dialects of English and the reading process is addressed in this booklet, designed for use by reading practitioners and other educators. The main questions are treated in connection with: (1) language difference and reading: (2) approaches to reading and dialect differences: (3) reading materials and dialect differences; and (4) reading tests and dialect differences. Some of the specific issues treated are: (1) the possibility of predicting reading problems: (2) the relationship between lack of proficiency in spoken language and difficulty in learning to read: (3) the problem of differences between the dialect of the student and that of the reading materials: (4) the connection between comprehension problems and effective methods: (5) the question of alternatives to conventional reading texts: (6) reading failure among nonstandard English speakers in connection with choice of reading materials: (7) detecting the cause of "incorrect" responses on standardized tests: and (8) the use of other testing techniques. A list of references is included. (Author/AMH)

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DIALECTS AND EDUCATIONAL EQUITY

Reading and Dialect Differences

Walt Wolfram, Lance Potter, Nancy M. Yanofsky, and Roger W. Shuy

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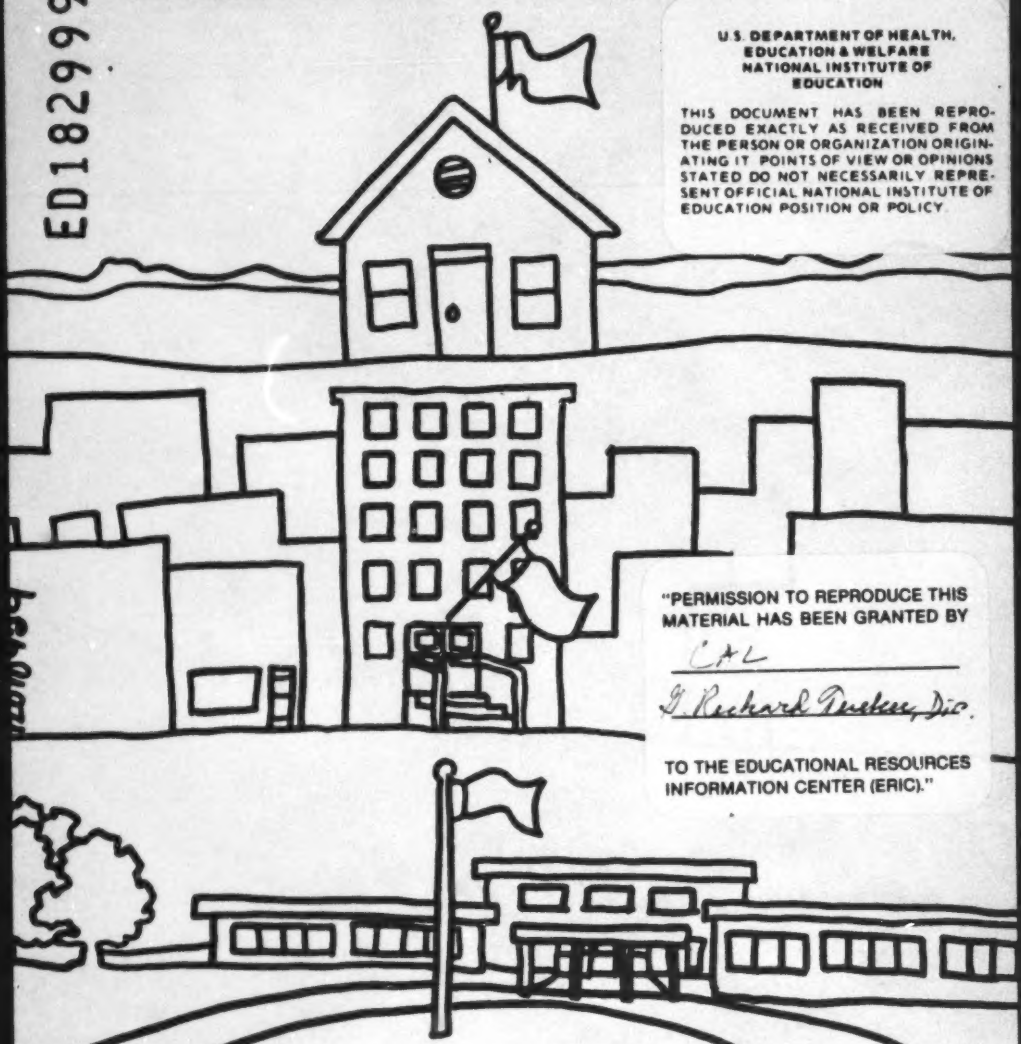

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Dialects and Educational Equity

Language inevitably plays a central role in education. It is used as a means of transmitting information and is an essential ingredient in the development and evaluation of particular educational skills. In addition, language is a vehicle of social identification as people react to one another based on the way they speak. The importance of language in education, coupled with its social significance, makes it a key factor in the struggle for educational equity.

Over the past two decades, a great deal of research has been undertaken on language diversity in American English, particularly among the economically impoverished and ethnically and socially isolated members of our society—those groups who speak what has been labeled "nonstandard English." Research on these varieties has raised some fundamental social and educational issues—matters that cannot be ignored by those vested with the responsibility of educating ***all*** students. ***Dialects and Educational Equity*** attempts to address some of these issues on the basis of what is currently known about language variation.

Our concern is the dissemination of information relevant to the needs of practitioners, and the format of this series is designed to highlight this orientation. Each booklet is arranged in a question-answer format, with the questions representing the kinds of issues raised by practitioners in surveys, workshops, and discussion groups and the answers based on current research information addressing the concerns. The first two booklets, ***Dialogue on Dialects*** and ***Exploring Dialects***, address preliminary concerns about dialect differences while the booklets, ***Speech Pathology and Dialect Differences***, ***Reading and Dialect Differences***, and ***Language Arts and Dialect Differences***, address more specialized educational issues. At the end of each discussion in the booklets, certain other readings are suggested for those who may wish to pursue more information on a particular topic.

Practitioners and researchers in the areas of specialization considered have guided the development of these publications from the initial planning to the final products. In addition, staff consultants at the Center for Applied Linguistics, Roger W. Shuy and Peter A. Eddy, advised on many phases of the project. Lance Potter, of our staff, researched many topics of relevance, and Marlene Zack attended to the fine details of typing the original booklets. Finally, Diane Bartosh, of the Publications Program at the Center for Applied Linguistics, developed the layout and edited the final manuscript. Our appreciation is extended to these individuals, as well as the many anonymous practitioners who originally brought our attention to the issues raised here.

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Preface

Reading is a fundamental right that should be accessible to all citizens in our society. Unfortunately, this is not the case—disproportionate numbers of people from culturally different groups are among those for whom this right is often not a reality. Numerous reasons have been cited to explain reading failure, but our concern here is with the recurring theme of language differences and reading. We have attempted to represent what is currently known in this area and, more specifically, we have addressed the relationship between nonstandard dialects of English and the reading process.

This booklet is designed for use by reading practitioners and other educators who have concerns and questions about dialect differences and reading. Despite all that is known about reading and all that is known about dialects of English, there are neither simple answers nor simple solutions to this complex issue. Nonetheless, the existing knowledge base can serve as a useful guide for practitioners.

We have tried to accurately portray practitioners' concerns as they have been revealed to us in workshops, discussions, and surveys. This booklet has also benefited from the comments of Phyllis Weaver and William S. Hall. The assistance of the project co-director, Donna Christian, has helped us in all stages of development and preparation.

Walt Wolfram
Lance Potter
Nancy M. Yanofsky
Roger W. Shuy

LANGUAGE DIFFERENCES & READING

Every reading teacher knows that some students have more difficulty learning to read than others. Very often, those children who don't speak standard English seem to have the most trouble. Is there any truth to this impression?

Many educators have become increasingly alarmed at the literacy situation in American schools today. As the need for reading skills increases, so does our awareness that large numbers of people in our society do not possess adequate literacy skills. Among the many people with significant reading problems are those who do not speak what has been labeled "standard English." Reading problems seem to be more common among nonstandard English speakers than among their standard English speaking counterparts. We should point out, however, that reading failure is hardly limited to these groups of people; many standard English speaking children have reading problems.

Can we say that speaking a nonstandard dialect of English is likely to cause a reading problem?

Research certainly shows that there is a correlation between speaking nonstandard varieties and reading failure; that is, the likelihood of reading problems developing is increased if a person is a member of a nonstandard English speaking population. But to say that this correlation exists is different from saying that speaking a nonstandard variety actually causes this failure. An important distinction must be made between "correlation" and "causation." There are actually a number of factors which correlate with low reading achievement, ranging from the incidence of nutritional problems to the number of books available for reading in the home. While various factors correlate with the existence of reading problems, we cannot say that any one of them is directly or solely responsible. Dialect difference is, then, just one of the factors which correlates with reading failure.

Several observations argue against the conclusion that speaking a nonstandard dialect is the exclusive cause of reading failure. Since there are many successful readers who come from nonstandard English speaking backgrounds, we cannot say that speaking a nonstandard variety invariably leads to problems. By the same token, not all standard English speakers are proficient readers. Therefore, we conclude that speaking a nonstandard variety does not ensure reading failure, just as speaking a standard variety does not necessarily ensure reading success. Since a correlation exists, however, between type of dialect spoken and reading achievement, dialect differences deserve consideration in terms of the ways in which they may relate to the reading process.

Can you predict reading problems for children who have spoken language problems? If a child lacks proficiency in spoken language, will this child have more difficulty in learning to read?

Some research studies claim that a person who has difficulty in processing spoken language also has difficulty processing written language. There are, for example, different levels of competency in comprehending oral language, and a person who has problems in this area usually manifests comparable problems in comprehending writ-

ten language since both media seem to depend on similar, closely related underlying language abilities. In light of this research, it is particularly important to understand how dialect differences relate to basic language proficiency. It is sometimes assumed that those who speak so-called nonstandard dialects of English are less competent in basic language skills, and that these dialects are simply imperfect or incomplete versions of the standard variety. Research on different dialects, however, reveals that dialects are distinguished by regular sets of rules, and that **no** dialect is inherently more logical or systematic than another. Dialects are simply different—a product of how language invariably divides itself into subgroups in the areas of pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary.

As language is divided into dialects on the basis of social, ethnic, and regional factors, some patterns are viewed with higher or lower social esteem than others. With respect to English, those held in higher esteem are considered to be "standard English" and those in low esteem are considered to be nonstandard English. Standard English really represents a value judgment about certain rules or patterns of language usage, and is unrelated to the basic language ability necessary for efficient communication. So, the only real difference between varieties called nonstandard English and standard English is the prestige value associated with particular varieties. All normal speakers of nonstandard and standard varieties possess the same underlying language skills, so there is no reason to maintain that a person speaking standard English would inherently be more proficient in the skills necessary for reading.

Even if we conclude that all dialects of English are equally efficient as communication systems, we still have to face the fact that the language in reading material is considerably closer to standard English than it is to other varieties. Doesn't this make it easier for the speaker of a standard variety to learn to read, since most of the texts are written in standard English?

It is reasonable to expect that the closer a person's spoken language variety is to the language reading material, the easier it will be to learn to read the material. And, since the language of most reading material is closer to standard English varieties than to other varieties, we can further predict that it is easier for the standard English speaker to learn how to read this material. This is an assumption that has guided considerable research on the reading difficulties encountered by speakers of nonstandard dialects.

While this is a reasonable assumption, two points of qualification need to be made. The first concerns the general relationship of spoken language and written language and the second concerns the relationship between standard and nonstandard dialects. We cannot simply assume that the material read by standard English speakers is identical to the way they speak and that it is different for the nonstandard English speaker. Evidence shows that there are differences between written and spoken language regardless of the speaker's dialect background. Certain constructions used in many early reading materials are not used by any English speaking children in natural conversation. For example, adverbs are often placed at the beginning of the sentence in beginning reading materials, as in *Over and over rolled the ball* or *Up the hill they ran*, but such sequences are not found in children's speech. Similarly, the consecutive repetition of noun phrases as in *The boy has a boat. The boy likes the boat. The boat is red.* is quite unlike spoken language discourse, where pronouns are used for successive references (e.g., *The boy has a boat and he likes it. It's red.*). So,

all people learning to read English actually encounter language structures that differ somewhat from their spoken language. However, this reading material will differ more for the speaker of a nonstandard variety than it will for the speaker of a standard variety. For example, a nonstandard speaker may use multiple negatives such as *He didn't hit nothing* or different subject-verb agreement as in *We was there*—forms not typically found in beginning reading materials. These differences are in addition to the differences mentioned above, which are confronted by all English speakers. The mismatch between spoken and written language thus exists for all readers, but *the degree of mismatch is greater for the speaker of a nonstandard dialect.*

The second qualification concerns the nonstandard English speaker's ability to comprehend standard English. Most research indicates that nonstandard English speakers generally have little difficulty in comprehending spoken standard English. On this basis, it does not seem reasonable to predict that the difference between the language of the reading materials, which is more like standard English, and the nonstandard English dialect will pose a serious comprehension problem. This does not mean, however, that the degree of difference between written and spoken language does not have any effect on the reading process; it simply cautions against the premature conclusion that the basic problem encountered by nonstandard English speakers is the difference between their spoken language and the written language of the reading material. If a serious comprehension problem existed for a nonstandard English speaker confronted with standard English in spoken language, we would be safer in predicting the language difference to have a similar role in reading, but this is not the case.

The relationship between reading failure and dialect differences doesn't seem obvious. In view of the uncertainty about this relationship, is it necessary for a reading teacher to be informed about dialect differences?

There are several reasons why knowledge about dialect differences is significant for the reading teacher. In the first place, knowledge of these differences can affect how a teacher analyzes a student's oral rendition of a reading passage. (Oral reading, of course, is one important way of determining a person's strengths and weaknesses in handling written material.) Consider the following example as read by a child who speaks a nonstandard variety of English commonly referred to as Vernacular Black English:

Text: *John missed a game, and Ruth's brother doesn't like it.*
Reader: *John miss' a game, an' Ruf brovuh don't like it.*

Several items are noticeably different in the oral rendition of the passage: the absence of the possessive *-s*, the absence of the *-ed*, the form *don't* for *doesn't*, and the pronunciations of *Ruth* and *brother*. All of these "deviations" are perfectly predictable in terms of the reader's spoken dialect. Furthermore, this particular rendition could signal appropriate decoding and accurate comprehension, since none of the deviations seem to change the meaning of the text. Thus, dialect differences do influence the oral reading of a passage, but they don't necessarily change the meaning of that passage. It is important to know how these differences might be manifested in an oral rendition of a reading passage in order to distinguish between a real reading problem and appropriate dialect reading.

Information about dialect differences is also important as an aid in the interpretation

of responses in standardized reading tests. Consider, for example, a test which includes the following items:

(1) *Choose the words that sound the same:* pin/pen reef/wreath find/fine their/there here/hear

(2) *Choose the correct word to complete the sentence:*

Yesterday he *come/came* over to the house.
He *done/did* what he had to do.

The identification of *pen* and *pin*, *fine* and *find*, and *reef* and *wreath* as sounding the same or the choice of *come* and *done* as the appropriate grammatical response reflect regular patterns in the spoken language. With a knowledge of the child's pronunciation and grammatical patterns the teacher can understand some of these responses as a manifestation of dialect differences.

Another reason for maintaining that dialect information is essential is related to attitudes about a student's language. Imagine the following scenario in which students tell stories that are then used as the basis of a reading texts. When students tell a story that contains nonstandard dialect features, they may be told to "talk right," so that the instructor can transcribe a "decent" story. As the instructor writes down the story, much of the grammar and vocabulary are changed to put it into "correct" form. An attitude about the worth of the children's language is thus communicated, and they come away from this situation believing that their language is in some sense wrong and inferior. Knowledge about dialect differences, then, is essential in terms of underlying attitudes about the nature and effect of language diversity.

We can conclude that a knowledge about dialect differences affects various activities related to reading, including teaching procedures, student assessment and attitudes about those who do not speak standard varieties of English.

What particular knowledge about dialect differences is necessary for a reading teacher to work effectively with students from different ethnic and social communities?

Researchers who have looked at dialect differences and reading have suggested, either explicitly or implicitly, several types of information that reading instructors should have. First of all, a general understanding of the nature of language diversity is required. Without an understanding of the systematic and patterned nature of differences, it is difficult to appreciate dialects for what they are—regular and natural subgroupings of language. Knowledge of particular structures in the dialects spoken by those students learning to read, whether they are standard or nonstandard English is also necessary. This specific knowledge is essential to understanding why certain forms occur, where they occur, and how they should be viewed in the context of assessing reading skills. So, for example, the pronunciation rule which explains why a speaker would pronounce *pin* and *pen* the same (the absence of contrast between *i* and *e* before *n*) or the grammatical rule which explains why *done* may be used as a simple past tense form are necessary aspects of an instructor's knowledge for full understanding of a reader's performance.

Suggested Readings

Two other booklets in this series, *Dialogue on Dialects* and *Exploring Dialects*, give more detailed information on the nature of U.S. dialect diversity, as well as some of

the major structures that differentiate the dialects of Enlish. The introductory essay in *Language Difference: Do They Interfere?* by Roger W. Shuy entitled "Nonstandard Dialect Problems: An Overview" considers the role of the teacher, instructional system, and researcher in approaching dialect differences. "Seven Fallacies: Reading Retardation and the Urban Disadvantaged Beginning Reader" by S. Alan Cohen and Thelma Cooper in *The Reading Teacher* also discusses many of the issues talked about in this section.

APPROACHES TO READING & DIALECT DIFFERENCES

There is considerable discussion about what actually takes place when a person reads. Can you assume that the same processes are taking place regardless of the dialect of the reader?

All readers—regardless of their spoken dialect—must apply general linguistic skills during the reading process. In order to obtain meaning from the printed page, readers must rely on their knowledge about grammar and semantics; that is, they must be able to figure out the grammatical structures and the meanings of sentences, drawing heavily on both their linguistic and background knowledge. An understanding of these general skills is important regardless of the reader's dialect. However, the precise way in which linguistic skills are applied in the reading process is not yet a settled issue.

There are primarily two competing theories to account for the reading process—what may be called the **dependent** model and the **parallel** model. These theories seek to describe how reading is accomplished, including those general linguistic skills all readers need, independent of their linguistic background. A major difference between the two lies in their explanations of how the reader obtains information from the printed page. Proponents of the *dependent* model argue that print is first translated into an inner representation of the sounds of the language ("silent speech"). The reader then applies the same linguistic strategies and techniques that are applied to oral language, so that the written text is processed and understood as if it were spoken language. The first and most basic activity in this model is changing print to sound. The critical skill that is stressed is "decoding"—the ability to derive the pronunciation of the printed form from the written letter combinations provided in the text.

In contrast with this model is the *parallel* model of reading. Proponents of this model argue that the initial decoding into "silent speech" is not necessary and that this bit-by-bit processing is typically by-passed in the actual reading process. They deemphasize the importance and relevance of decoding and maintain that the reader does not necessarily start by changing print to sound. Rather, the reader processes much larger chunks of information—larger syntactic and semantic units than the dependent model suggests.

Do differing viewpoints on the reading process have practical application for examining the reading performance of nonstandard English speakers?

From a practical perspective, the two models differ in their ability to account for different kinds of dialect influences (most noticeable in oral reading activities). In the

dependent model, where bit-by-bit decoding plays a central role, deviations from the text that relate to sound-symbol correspondences would be expected. The parallel model, with its emphasis on processing larger chunks of information, would predict differences in syntax and semantics instead. Consider, for example, two possible renditions of the following passage by a speaker of Vernacular Black English:

Text: There won't be anything to do until he finds out if he can go without taking John's brother.

Reader 1: Deuh won't be anything to do until he fin' out if he can go wifout takin'_ John_ brovuh.

Reader 2: It won't be nofin to do 'til he fin' out can he go wifout takin'_ John_ brovuh.

These two versions contrast the ways in which a reader with this dialect background might be expected to deviate from the text while reading aloud. In the rendition by Reader 1, deviations from the text are restricted to the sound-symbol correspondences related to the bit-by-bit decoding of each word (*d* for *th* in *there*, *f* for *th* in *without*), as predicted by the dependent model; changes in syntax emerge in the rendition by Reader 2 (*can he go* for *if he can go*, *won't be nofin* for *won't be anything*, and *it* for *there*), following the principles of the parallel model. The production by Reader 2 illustrates an appropriate dialect "paraphrase" of the text. In practice, both kinds of differences from the text may be observed during oral reading.

Although the dependent model may not readily explain oral reading versions like that of Reader 2, advocates of this model suggest that there is evidence, apart from reading, to support their position. They maintain that the way language information is ultimately stored in the brain is in pronunciation "bits," and that people match these bits of pronunciation with what they hear in order to obtain the meaning of a message. Their conclusion is that readers follow the same procedure, decoding each bit of visual information into their own pronunciation bits in order to obtain the meaning from a reading passage.

Advocates of the parallel model, on the other hand, draw a great deal of support for their position from evidence found in oral reading. They maintain that oral reading reflects how written text is processed and that important insight is gained by looking at the kind of deviations that occur in the oral rendition of any written text. Many of these deviations point to the fact that readers retain the meaning of the text while engaging in "oral paraphrasing." For example, the following oral deviations have been observed which involve a paraphrase of the text material without any obvious change in meaning. They are not the result of an influence from any particular dialect, but show how readers use their knowledge of English grammar, their understanding of context, and their general knowledge of the subject matter in processing the text.

Text: They can make cement, fertilizer, and all sorts of chemicals out of the rock.

Reader 1: They cannot make cement, fertilizer, and all sorts of chemicals without the rock.

Text: In the moon colony where the large dome will shut out the dangerous rays of the sun, plants will be bathed in special fluorescent lights...

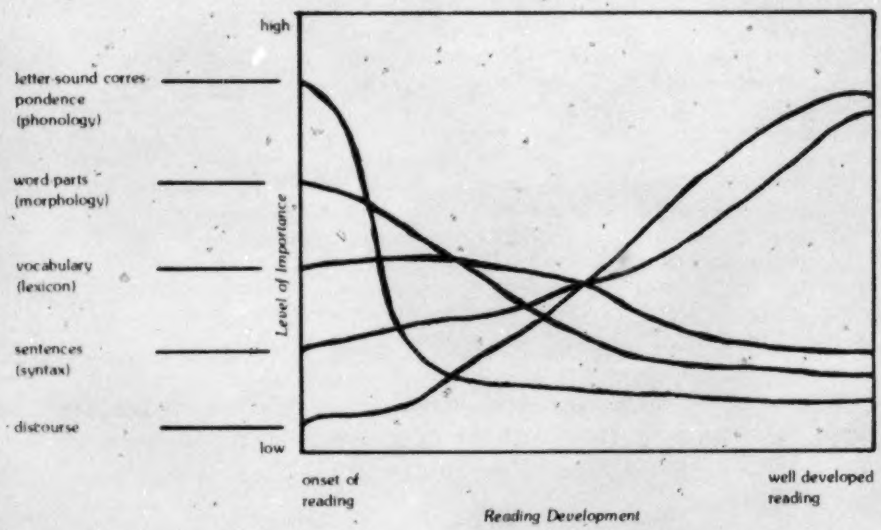
Reader 2: In the moon colony there are large domes which shut out the dangerous rays of the sun. Plants will be bathed in special fluorescence light...

From the standpoint of the parallel model, then, renditions of texts that include paraphrasing from dialect differences (as in the case of Reader 2 above) would be predicted for the speaker of a nonstandard dialect, in accordance with the general paraphrasing pattern expected for any reader. In the dependent model these kinds of dialect paraphrases are not accounted for as readily.

Does one of the models of reading account for the deviations in reading by nonstandard English speakers better than the other?

Available evidence shows that dialect renditions of a text may be revealed on all levels of language, ranging from the sound-symbol correspondences to syntax and semantics. Thus, oral versions of texts may certainly include dialect renditions that reflect only phonological differences such as those shown for Reader 1, and phonological and grammatical differences as shown by Reader 2. (However, this does not mean that all the predictable differences due to dialect influence will be manifested on any particular occasion.) The evidence that has been considered appears to offer more support for the parallel model of the reading process, but not without some qualification.

Practical experience indicates that different levels of language may take on prominence at different stages in the progression of reading skills. Thus, processing sound-symbol correspondences may be relatively important for the reader in the beginning stages of reading, but they become less important as syntax and semantics become more important. One investigator has depicted the varying degree of importance for different aspects of language in terms of the following graph.



According to this view of the reading process, the following generalization can be stated: In the early stages of reading acquisition, greater nonstandard dialect influences are likely to be found in sound-symbol correspondences. However, in later stages of reading development, an increase in syntactic and semantic differences may be found. This progression of dialect influence is to be expected since more advanced readers are likely to paraphrase the content of a passage rather than proceed word-by-word.

If the dialect of a student differs from that of the reading materials, do these differences contribute to a comprehension problem?

Although there is a possibility that dialect differences may directly interfere with understanding a passage, research has not clearly shown this to be the case. At this point, it is important to draw a distinction between **dialect influence** and **dialect interference.** Dialect *influence* refers to a dialect rendition that has no consequence on the meaning of the passage, while dialect *interference* refers to differences which may affect the ultimate comprehension of the passage. There is more evidence for dialect influence than there is for interference. For example, a number of differences in pronunciation are reflected in the letter-sound relations, but very few of them have the potential for real interference in comprehension. It is possible that some differences which result in identical pronunciations (e.g., *find* and *fine* or *send* and *sinned*) might have the potential for interference, but research shows that pronunciation differences actually result in little or no interference in reading text materials in context.

Many changes in grammatical forms also show influence rather than interference, since they do not result in meaning differences. Changing forms such as *Sally's hat* to *Sally hat* or *five cents* to *five cent* does not affect basic meaning. However, there are changes in the text which may not preserve the meaning of the written text. So, if a student reads a sentence such as *He's done trying to please everyone* as *He done tried to please everyone*, the action might be comprehended as a completed past action (signaled by the meaning of *done* in the latter case) when, in fact, the activity is indicated as present completed action in the original version. (For example, the text of the original might be interpreted as *He's done trying to please everyone for the time being, but he'll resume again later.* This interpretation would not be possible for the altered version.) If the sentence *John is a good boy* is read as *John be a good boy*, the change of *is* to *be* might signal a change from a permanent attribute of John (*John is*) to a nonpermanent attribute, one that applies only sometimes (*John be*).

The possibility of direct dialect interference has to be admitted, but most of the research evidence points to a far greater role for dialect influence. From a practical standpoint, this means that most of the dialect changes of the text are not important to comprehension. Of course, teachers should have enough background knowledge about the reader's dialect to recognize when, in fact, a particular variation from the text is simply a reflection of this influence or when a particular variation results in a meaning change.

There is some question about the use of different instructional methods with speakers of nonstandard dialects. Is there one method that is more effective than the others?

Most of the concern about methods of instruction has focused on initial reading techniques. All of the methods have advantages and disadvantages due to the fact that each tends to highlight certain elements of the reading process, often to the exclusion of others. Some studies have suggested particular emphases which might be best for speakers of nonstandard dialects, but no one method emerges as clearly superior. With the range of reading methodologies available, there is evidence that suggests that the most effective methodology is to blend different approaches. Nevertheless, re-

searchers generally attempt to isolate methodologies for the purpose of comparison and teachers do, in fact, employ one strategy more than others.

The two most common methods, **sight word** ("look-say") and **phonics** (letter-sound correspondences) have somewhat different implications for speakers of nonstandard dialects. *Sight-word* programs rely on the student learning the graphic configuration of whole words. Vocabulary is learned in whole word units with an emphasis on understanding the words both individually and in the context of the sentence. Once a controlled series of words is learned on sight, others are introduced which can be recognized in connected text. *Phonics* instruction, on the other hand, focuses attention on the letter-sound correspondences of words, with the intent of decoding, or "sounding-out," the combinations of letters to make words. As with sight-word methods, there are numerous variations within the phonics approach, but they all stress the learning of sounds that correspond to the letters of the alphabet. "Synthetic phonics," for example, starts with the individual letter sounds and combines them into words, whereas "analytic phonics" starts with the word and then breaks it down into familiar letter combinations. Another phonics approach, often called the "linguistic approach," seeks to make decoding more systematic by closely limiting the sets of words introduced to the student. Only words which follow "regular" sound-symbol relationships (e.g., *bat, mat, sat,* etc.) are introduced initially, so that the reader's attention can be directed to consistent and easily observable pronunciation patterns.

Phonics has been shown to be superior in early word recognition skills and provides more assistance to the reader in attacking new words, whereas sight-word strategies seem more closely aligned with a child's language experience in terms of using words in normal language contexts. Because of the emphasis on sounds in the phonics approach, however, speakers of nonstandard varieties may encounter some difficulty if an instructor is not sensitive to the pronunciation differences in the child's variety. For example, if a child who speaks Vernacular Black English reads *t-oo-f* for *tooth* or *s-m-oo-v* for *smooth*, these represent an appropriate sound-symbol relationship for that child given the rules of the dialect; similarly, if a child from rural Appalachia reads *yellow* as *y-e-l-r* or *fire* something like *f-a-r*, these may represent appropriate sound-symbol relationships for that child, since these pronunciations conform to the rules for that dialect. In order not to misjudge an appropriate dialect rendition as a sound-symbol error, the instructor needs an awareness of appropriate sound-symbol relationships in the child's variety of English. No unique disadvantages for speakers of nonstandard dialects are present if the sound differences are taken into proper account.

Dialect pronunciations of words are expected using the sight-word approach, but these are not as significant because the focus is on whole word recognition rather than individual letter-sound correspondences. Nonetheless, it is important to be aware of the dialect-specific pronunciations of words that differ from standard English. For instance, when the printed word is *wreath* and the student pronounces it like *reef*, it should not be assumed automatically that the item has been misidentified. In the sight-word method, vocabulary differences between dialects are more likely to occur in reading than in initial phonics, since focus is on the word level. For example, if a dialect speaker uses *range* as the word referring to what the text calls a *stove*, this difference may occur in the student's oral reading. In an initial emphasis on phonics, such a difference is not as likely to occur because of the emphasis on breaking down the word into its individual letter-sound correspondences. The need for understanding vocabulary differences, then, is especially important for an instructor using the sight-word method initially.

Suggested Readings

Research within Reach: A Research-Guided Response to Concerns of Reading Educators, by Phyllis Weaver and Fredi Shonkoff deals with many dimensions of the reading process in a lively question-answer format. The book written by Gibson and Levin, *The Psychology of Reading*, is also concerned with the general nature of the reading process, but from a more research-oriented perspective. Several articles in the anthology *Language Differences: Do They Interfere?* show how reading may relate to dialect differences, including "Dialect and the Reading Process" by Carolyn Burke, "Is Learning to Read Dialect Bound?" by Richard Venezky and Robin Chapman, and "Black English Phonology: The Question of Reading Interference" by Paul Jay Melmed. The collection of articles included in *Theory and Practice of Early Reading*, edited by Lauren Resnick and Phyllis Weaver, also contains papers on dialects and reading (e.g., Simons' "Black Dialect, Reading Interference and Classroom Interaction"), as well as a number of articles on the general nature of the reading process.

READING MATERIALS & DIALECT DIFFERENCES

Should anything be done about the language in reading materials in light of the different dialect backgrounds that students bring to the reading task?

Two basic positions have been taken regarding the language found in beginning reading materials. Some investigators advocate changing the language in the text because it is inappropriate for speakers of nonstandard dialects; others maintain that standard English language texts can be used for everyone because speakers of other dialects can make the necessary adjustments to the text. Both positions arise from a concern about the mismatch between the oral language of the students and the language typically found in standard English reading materials, but they differ in the strategies they propose for dealing with this issue. (The alternatives also seem to be based on different assumptions about the significance of the mismatch, which we have discussed.)

The focus of those who advocate changing the materials is on reducing the mismatch between reader and materials by making the language of the materials more closely resemble the reader's language. This change can actually be accomplished in several ways. One strategy is to remove (or avoid) certain constructions that are sensitive to dialect differences. For example, if an indirect question is formed as *He asked if he could come* in the standard dialect but *He asked could he come* in another dialect, this particular structure would be avoided in the materials. A structure common to all dialects of English could be used instead (in this case, a direct question such as *Can he come?*). Grammatical changes in the texts are intended to make the materials as neutral as possible with respect to dialect differences.

Another way of changing the text advocated by some investigators, involves the actual incorporation of nonstandard English constructions in the text materials. Thus, an indirect question formed as *He asked could he come* would be used instead of *He asked if he could come*. Similarly, multiple negatives (e.g., *He didn't do nothing*), different subject-verb agreement patterns (e.g., *We was here*), and different tense markings (e.g., *In those days, we went to the fiesta and we have a good time*) would be

found in the texts designed for communities where these patterns are the norm. Although the strategies may differ, both of these approaches are based on the assumption that the mismatch between spoken and written language can impede the acquisition of reading skills.

The position that standard English texts should be retained for all students is based on the assumption that the language mismatch for the nonstandard English speaker is not a significant handicap. Different dialects may be accommodated to some extent, however, by allowing readers to deviate from the text in their oral reading in ways that are consistent with the rules of their dialect. So, if a student reads the sentence *He asked if he could come* as *He aks could he come*, following the patterns of dialect influence discussed earlier, it may be accepted as a correct reading. This perspective requires reading instructors to be knowledgeable about the kinds of variation they can expect to hear from different dialect groups so they will know when a particular form is a reflection of a dialect pattern rather than a reading error.

Is it easier for a nonstandard English speaker to read if standard English is taught first?

Some people propose that standard English should be taught to all nonstandard dialect speakers before they learn how to read, while others maintain that this strategy is quite unnecessary. Those who advocate teaching standard English first maintain that this strategy will substantially reduce the mismatch between oral language and written text. They suggest that, once this mismatch is reduced, the student will have an easier time learning how to read.

Those who oppose teaching standard English prior to teaching reading cite several facts to support their position. First, the mismatch cannot be eliminated completely in conventional reading texts for any students, since all speakers of English are confronted with differences between written and spoken language. Furthermore, many speakers of nonstandard dialects show little difficulty in overcoming this mismatch. There is no clear-cut evidence that learning standard English will, in itself, increase the ease of learning to read. As a matter of fact, there is little evidence for predicting that spoken standard English can be taught successfully on a widescale basis.

It has also been suggested that standard English be taught simultaneously with the teaching of reading. To do this, a student's nonstandard English response is "corrected" to a standard English response during reading instruction. These two activities—language instruction and reading instruction—are quite different, however, and it could prove very confusing to students if they are not separated. For example, if a Vernacular Black English speaker reads *find* as *fin'*, or a rural Appalachian dialect speaker reads *cliff* as *clifft*, or a southwestern American Indian student reads *sing* as *sin*, a letter-sound correspondence problem would not be indicated. Such a problem would be indicated, however, if the same students read *cup* as *sup* or *big* as *dig*. The first set of examples involves accurate reflections of sound-symbol correspondences in particular dialects, whereas the second set does not reflect the patterns of any of the dialects. To correct both types of productions as if they were the same can only lead to confusion on the part of the learner, since readers depend on their knowledge of language to guide their approach to the printed page. A New England child might similarly be confused if told that the only correct way to read *car* is with an *r* at the end, or that *caught* and *cot* must contain different vowel sounds to be read properly. The acquisition of a standard English dialect requires different skills from those involved in the acquisition of reading. If the two activities are combined within the same instructional task, student confusion can be expected.

Dialect readers have been suggested as a viable alternative to conventional reading texts. Are these materials more effective for nonstandard English speakers?

Dialect readers were motivated by the hypothesis that the differences between a reader's nonstandard English system and the system of a standard English text are too great to enable successful reading acquisition. They reflect the position mentioned above in which the reading materials are changed by incorporating nonstandard features into the language of the text. Dialect readers, unlike conventional texts, are geared for a particular community of speakers. They are specifically designed to include those linguistic forms that are prevalent and regular in the oral speech of such communities. Their goal is to build on the existing language of beginning readers, not to replace other reading materials. According to this approach, a child who speaks a variety such as Vernacular Black English should be introduced to a reading text that is written in that dialect (as in Version 2 below) rather than to a reading text that is written in standard English (as in Version 1). The Vernacular Black English passage is a deliberate attempt to incorporate the grammatical and vocabulary features of this particular dialect. Changes in spelling are generally considered nonessential, since the orthography of standard English seems appropriate for a range of dialects.

Version 1: *Standard English*

"Look down here," said Suzy.
"I can see a girl in here.
That girl looks like me.
Come here and look, David.
Can you see that girl?"

Version 2: *Vernacular Black English*

Susan say, "Hey you-all, look down here!"
"I can see a girl in here.
The girl, she look like me.
Come here and look, David!
Could you see the girl?"

Once the reading skill is established, most dialect reader series would begin a transition to standard English texts; that is, later texts gradually eliminate nonstandard constructions, as the materials eventually conform to the patterns of standard English.

Even though dialect readers were originally intended to be written for all nonstandard English dialects, the only materials that have ever been prepared are in Vernacular Black English. The use of dialect readers has always met with very mixed reactions. For many people, both traditional educators as well as community leaders, anything that is written for children in a dialect other than standard English is viewed as educationally unsound. They consider dialect readers to be patronizing and an unnecessary educational accommodation. Negative reactions from this wide range of people have virtually eliminated dialect readers from consideration as a serious alternative to more traditionally based texts.

Despite strong opposition from community leaders and educators, a small group of people has enthusiastically advocated the use of dialect readers. Some research on the effectiveness of these materials (as compared to traditional reading materials) has

shown small gains in their favor. However, no extensive research has indicated that the use of dialect readers is significantly more effective.

It is possible that dialect readers will be given a more complete examination in the near future. Recent events, including a court case in Michigan concerning dialect differences and educational equity, have revived interest in a range of instructional alternatives. Many of those who were once opposed to dialect readers (as well as any use of nonstandard dialects in the schools) are now being called upon to reassess their position. This change in atmosphere may provoke a re-examination of the effectiveness of dialect readers, despite the controversy that surrounds them. If children who are taught to read using dialect readers can also read conventional texts and if they also begin to score higher on reading tests, then dialect readers may become more widely accepted.

What's the difference between dialect readers and language experience materials? Don't both use oral language as the basis for developing reading texts?

Dialect readers and language experience materials are actually quite different. Dialect readers are written materials that attempt to be true to the general language patterns of a particular group of speakers. Language experience materials, on the other hand, reflect the language patterns of an individual speaker. In language experience, it is assumed that the greatest asset new (beginning) readers have is their existing ability to use and understand language. Building on this assumption, language experience materials reflect children's individual linguistic systems. The primary focus, therefore, is on materials that the students create themselves; the written text is a transcript of a story that the child initially presents orally.

In developing a language experience program for nonstandard dialect speakers, transcribing can become problematic. In some cases, teachers edit the stories into standard English so that the written version is no longer an accurate version of what the child actually said. But even with some editing of this type, the language of the written text is still closer to the child's language than that found in either traditional reading texts or dialect readers. (Dialect readers are somewhat further removed because they are created for a whole community of nonstandard dialect speakers rather than an individual.)

In a sense, dialect readers are the midpoint on a continuum. They are certainly a closer representation of the oral language patterns of dialect speakers than are traditional reading texts, but they are still an approximation of a reader's speech. So, at one end of the continuum are the conventional texts and at the other end of the continuum are language experience materials. Conventional texts are the farthest away from the linguistic system of most nonstandard English speakers while language experience materials, in their untampered form, are the closest written rendition of any given reader's language system.

Despite the differences between them, these two kinds of reading materials may be grouped together because of people's negative reactions to them when used with dialect speakers. At the heart of most people's objections is the use of nonstandard linguistic patterns in print. Even people who are tolerant of dialect differences in spoken language often object strenuously to the use of these forms in reading material.

Can reading failure be tied directly to existing reading materials? If the reading materials were changed, would

the reading problems of nonstandard English speakers be substantially reduced?

Although no research has answered this question with complete satisfaction, a number of observations are relevant. First, it appears as if the language mismatch is not always the central factor. Comprehension problems do not appear to be solely the result of dialect differences since large numbers of differences can be classified as being due to dialect influence rather than being due to dialect interference. It has been pointed out that there are situations in the world where the mismatch between reading materials and oral language is much greater than that experienced by nonstandard dialect speakers in the United States, yet there do not appear to be significant numbers of problem readers in these countries. In Switzerland, for example, the texts are written in standard German and much of the northern population speaks Swiss-German, yet significant reading problems are not encountered.

Second, there are studies suggesting that the interest level of reading materials is more important than the linguistic form of such materials. Interest level here must be interpreted to include all aspects of background knowledge which can in any way contribute to or interfere with the comprehension of a given passage. Materials which assume certain cultural backgrounds (either implicitly or explicitly) for understanding the text will be problematic for large numbers of readers. For example, a student from a community with little background knowledge about space travel might find a passage that is primarily devoted to this topic difficult to comprehend (read); this holds true regardless of the linguistic form of the passage. (It might be true that a passage on this topic that is written in a dialect that is closer to the oral dialect of the reader might be somewhat easier to read, but we still predict that it will be a troublesome passage.) The role of cultural themes in reading passages may also relate to the finding that high-interest reading materials may have a higher potential for accurate comprehension than will low-interest materials. While this research finding is true for any and all readers, regardless of their language background, different kinds of content may constitute high-interest passages for one group but not for another. Therefore, materials aimed at some cultural groups may not be as easily comprehended by others.

Finally, some studies have pointed to the importance of cultural and social values about the role of reading. The importance assigned to reading as an essential skill for social and occupational ability can be quite class- and culture-specific. In fact, it has been suggested that reading must be valued within a culture-specific setting before widescale success can ever be expected.

Observations such as these certainly suggest that materials are not the sole contributing factor to reading problems and reading failure for different dialect speakers and cultural groups. This, however, should not be interpreted as meaning that they play no role at all. The nature of the interaction between reading materials and different nonstandard English speakers still needs to be investigated, but it must be kept in perspective in relation to other factors discussed.

Suggested Readings

"Sociolinguistic Alternatives in Teaching Reading to Nonstandard Speakers," by Walt Wolfram, details the advantages and disadvantages of different alternatives in the selection of reading materials. A discussion of the "avoidance" approach to dialect differences in materials is discussed in an article entitled, "Neutralizing the Effect of the

Nonstandard Dialect" in *Language Differences: Do They Interfere?* by Dorothy Seymour. Another article in this volume, "Dialect Readers: Rationale, Use and Value," reviews the issues surrounding dialect readers. A section in *Research within Reach*, edited by Weaver and Shonkoff, entitled "Teaching Black Children to Read with Materials Written in Standard Black English," is also concerned with this issue. Many other helpful references on dialect readers can be found in the above works.

READING TESTS & DIALECT DIFFERENCES

Standard English speakers score considerably higher on standardized reading tests than those who speak other dialects of English. Could it be possible that their dialect difference is, in some sense, responsible for their low reading scores on the tests?

There is an ongoing debate as to whether standardized tests, particularly standardized reading tests, reflect the linguistic and cultural concerns of nonstandard English speakers. In some cases, strong opinions have been formed without solid research evidence. It is therefore quite important to separate facts from opinions, and areas of agreement from areas of contention.

Several facts are generally agreed upon regarding the results obtained from reading tests. First, researchers have found a positive correlation between low reading test scores and populations that use nonstandard dialects. Furthermore, many test takers who score low on these tests have, in fact, been diagnosed as having genuine reading problems of one type or another. Other measures of reading ability have also confirmed the reading problems for these students. Concern about the quality, form, and context of the tests, then, is not meant to deny the seriousness of the reading problems which do exist for some populations. It does, however, draw attention to the fact that the tests may not accurately reflect the nature of the reading problems. In some cases, serious misclassification may take place on the basis of test scores; some students may be classified as poor readers even if they aren't, due to the kinds of language and cultural items included in the test. In other cases, certain kinds of reading problems may be indicated by scores that are really a function of language differences. Certain speakers may be penalized because their native dialect is different from that assumed as the norm in a test. For example, a deficiency in decoding skills might be indicated from a test when, in fact, the test taker simply applies the pronunciation rules of the native dialect. The possibility of language bias in standardized reading tests is a legitimate matter of concern in making an accurate diagnosis of reading skills. Many other factors must certainly be considered along with dialect in the accurate diagnosis of reading skills, but researchers maintain that dialect differences cannot be excluded from this list of factors.

What are some of the exact ways in which dialect differences may affect scores in a standardized reading test?

Some exact manifestations of the role of language differences in a standardized reading test can be observed by considering the following situations. In each case, speakers of certain dialects might be scored incorrect for a response that conforms to

their native language patterns. In a section of a reading test that depends on standard English pronunciations, children are asked to distinguish *pen* from *pin* and *death* from *deaf* by sounding out the difference in these pairs of items. If a child's spoken dialect is a variety of southern White or Vernacular Black English, these pairs of items are pronounced the same. The child sounds them out according to the dialect's pronunciation rules and does not note a difference. This, of course, is different from standard English, where the words are differentiated by one sound, the vowel *i* and *e* in *pin* and *pen*, and the final consonant *th* and *f* in *death* and *deaf*. Since the norms for the test require the maintenance of a standard English distinction, the child's response is marked as incorrect, even though it follows precise rules of the variety. One level of difference in the dialect of the test and the test taker, then, may be pronunciation differences.

In another section of a reading test, students are required to choose the "correct" word to complete a sentence. For example, the child must choose between *them* and *those* in a sentence such as *I have read (them, those) books before* or between *no* and *any* in a sentence such as *I didn't hear (no, any) noise*. According to the standard English norm, one "correct" form is predicted (*those* and *any* in the above sentences), but the grammatical rules of the test taker's home dialect may predict another choice (*them* and *no*). So, systematic grammatical differences may also lead to faulty assessment.

In another task, students are asked to match appropriate words and pictures, demonstrating their word recognition skills. For example, students are given a cartoon showing trees with falling leaves and are then asked to select the appropriate word which characterizes this setting. The options in the test are *aunt, autumn, summer,* and *town*. The child is not familiar with the term *autumn* (the word the test developers consider correct for this scene), but is familiar with the word *fall*, which is used to refer to this season of the year. We thus have a third possible area of difference between the language of the test and the language of the test taker—a vocabulary difference. A test can inaccurately assess the reader from a region, social class, or cultural group which uses a vocabulary form different from the response required by the test.

Tests which only accept standard English, then, may be unfair to speakers of other dialects in the areas of pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary.

How do you know if a difference in a response on a reading test is due to a dialect difference?

The identification of differences attributable to dialects is based on the systematic examination of rules which distinguish the dialects of English. Descriptive summaries of dialects such as Vernacular Black English and Appalachian English include very specific linguistic rules. So, we can find a rule which accounts for a pronunciation of *pin* the same as *pen* or a rule which inserts *no* instead of *any*.

This systematic comparison of rules is based on a technique of language comparison known as comparative linguistics. In **contrastive linguistics,** rules of two languages or dialects of language are compared to determine where they are similar and where they are different. Based on the comparison, we can understand how a form in one dialect might correspond to another form in a different dialect. We would know on this basis, for example, that *f* at the end of a word might correspond to *th* in another dialect, or *no* might correspond to *any*. The application of the contrastive principle in the comparison of similarities and differences between dialects of English serves as the basis for systematically explaining some of the differences in tests.

Are there differences in addition to pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary that might relate to the language used in reading tests?

Differences in language are not limited to forms of pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary, even though these are the ones most commonly referred to in discussions of dialects. There are also differences in how language is used in the context of society. Facts about the real world, including facts about language use in that world, have been found to be essential in reading and in reading tests. These include, but are not limited to, the topic, cultural values associated with specific vocabulary items, and grammatical constructions and particular uses of language in social context. In fact, many tests related to the assessment of "comprehension" are based on the extension of language beyond the literal meaning of a passage. (It is virtually impossible to construct a reading comprehension test that is limited to the literal meaning of a passage. These tests also assess the child's ability to make inferences—the ability to connect explicitly stated information with those things believed to follow from this information.)

Background knowledge and cultural differences are among those factors that contribute to the inferred meanings supplied by the reader. Consider the following description in terms of the background information that an inner-city child from New York City and a resident of northern California near the Redwood Forests might bring to the test:

> They are so big that roads are built through their trunks. By counting the rings inside the tree trunk, one can tell the age of the tree.

If an inner-city child is unfamiliar with the use of the items *trunk* and *rings* in connection with trees, this passage might conjure up an image taking on the proportions of a fairy tale. On the other hand, a child raised in close proximity to the forest might find such a description almost trivial by the third grade. So background knowledge is essential in tasks related to reading comprehension. (Incidentally, this passage was included in the 1970 version of the *Metropolitan Achievement Test* for third graders.)

Now consider another account, also taken from a standardized reading comprehension test:

> "Good afternoon, little girl," said the policeman. "May I help you?"
>
> "I want to go to the park. I cannot find my way," said Nancy. "Please help me."

Given this part of the passage, the child is now supposed to select the one right ending for the story:

> The policeman said,
>
> a. Call your mother to take you.
>
> b. I am in a hurry.
>
> c. I will take you to the park.

Quite obviously, cultural values about the role of policemen play an important part in selecting the one "correct" answer, even though a reader with a different value orientation might select any of these responses as the appropriate one.

We see, then, that differences related to language use go considerably beyond vocabulary, grammatical, and pronunciation differences. Background information, cultural values, and culturally different ways of using language may be involved in reading. Recently, studies of language tests have been focusing on these kinds of dif-

ferences as well as the differences in pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. At this point, much of this information is anecdotal, but some experts feel that differences relating to language use in the context of certain cultural beliefs, expectations, and background information are really at the crux of comprehension differences, and that these differences cut across different social, regional, and ethnic groups.

If you took into account the different kinds of linguistic and cultural differences in scoring a test for different populations, would standardized reading tests then be fair?

Investigators of language and cultural differences in tests certainly recommend considering systematic differences of social and ethnic groups in scoring the responses from tests. But there are other factors in testing which must be considered as well. Certain aspects of the testing situation are designed to favor social and behavioral traits typically associated with middle-class children. For example, values about working as quickly as possible, the early acquisition of reading, and concentration, among others, can be quite culture-specific.

The techniques used to obtain information in many standardized reading tests also require an orientation to particular kinds of skill-training, which may be culture-specific. For example, phonics skills are often measured through the use of tasks such as rhyming words, words sounding the same, or looking at particular parts of a word rather than the whole word. Reading vocabulary may be measured by tasks which call for the association of words with identical or similar meanings ("synonyms" such as *proprietor* and *owner*), opposite meanings ("antonyms" such as *tall* and *short*), specific and general category relationships (e.g., *python* and *snake*), or descriptive, dictionary-like definitions (e.g., a *linguist* is a person who studies the organization of language). These particular tasks for getting at meaning are, of course, different from real life language use where meaning is derived by taking the word in context. Thus, a specialized set of skills may be needed in testing various facets of reading, and the failure to interpret the tasks in the intended way can lead to a picture of reading failure where, in fact, it may not exist. Current investigations point to the social aspects of the testing situation, the skills needed to show knowledge, and the test items as bases for bias in current standardized reading tests.

The picture painted for standardized testing in reading is not very encouraging. Are there other assessment techniques that are better?

This is a very complex question and there is no simple answer which emerges from current research in the study of reading assessment. However, several recommendations have emerged from the investigation of language differences related to standardized reading tests. One recommendation is the use of alternative methods of measuring reading achievement, so that scores from standardized reading tests are not the exclusive measure of reading skills. Minimizing the results from the single administration of a standardized test of reading is certainly in line with other areas of assessment, where standardized tests are used as a supplement of other, more natural types of assessment techniques.

Investigators of language differences in tests also have suggested that test responses be analyzed in terms of the systematic differences between dialects. So, if a working-class Black child marks *mile* and *mild* as sounding the same because of the regular

pronunciation rule which can eliminate the *d* in *mild*, this response would be interpreted as a legitimate reflection of a dialect difference, and not a reading error. Similarly, if a native Philadelphian marked items as *ran* and *man* as not rhyming because of the distinct vowels in these items (the *a* in *ran* as *a* and the *a* in *man* something like *e-u*), this, too, would be interpreted as a legitimate reflection of the Philadelphia pronunciation system, and not as a reading error. The interpretation of responses that takes into account dialect differences can help the evaluator see what effect dialect may be having in the responses—responses which may be legitimate in terms of the language system of the test taker but not in terms of the standardized norms of the test. Investigators have sometimes been surprised at the number of items in reading tests which allow this alternative explanation. In order to make such an interpretation, the evaluator must be familiar with the systematic differences between the dialects of various types of test takers, whether they be rural Appalachian, inner-city Black, or southwestern Chicano. This need has surfaced in another connection as well—understanding why certain forms might occur in the oral reading of passages instead of the actual forms written in the passage.

Finally, some researchers have suggested that asking students why particular answers might be chosen is a useful technique (i.e. "Why did you choose this answer?"). It allows the evaluator a glimpse of the child's reasoning behind an answer and can therefore be quite enlightening. In the comprehension test item about the policeman, a child could respond with "I am in a hurry" instead of "I will take you to the park," using a very appropriate rationale for the answer. For instance, the background knowledge from the child's culture might indicate that policemen are doing their job when they are hurrying from one place to another taking care of troublesome situations. The investigation of the reasons why particular answers are chosen by students can provide additional information about the nature of the child's reasoning and inferencing as it relates to the skills involved in reading comprehension. From this perspective, certain answers which are "wrong" according to the norms of a test might be very reasonable indications that the child is, in fact, reading with considerable understanding, even if it is from a perspective different from that intended by the author or test constructor. Specific information of this type may be considerably more useful than objective scores for educators concerned with a genuine assessment and development of students' reading skills.

Suggested Readings

The booklet *Reading Failure and the Tests*, by Deborah Meier, criticizes current tests of reading ability in a straightforward manner, with particular emphasis on the inappropriateness of these tests for speakers of nonstandard dialects. "Reading Tests and Nonstandard Language," by June O'Shields Hutchinson, which appears in *The Reading Teacher*, offers an analysis of *The Metropolitan Reading Test*. Walt Wolfram and Donna Christian's article, "On the Application of Sociolinguistic Information: Test Evaluation and Dialect Differences in Appalachia," takes the reader through the actual steps involved in considering the potential bias of a test.

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